

**Excerpts from my field diary (July 2009 onwards)**

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**Traditional Knowledge about medicinal insects and mites in [Chhattisgarh, India](#): An overview. [Updated Document, year 2010]**

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**Abstract**

The traditional medicinal knowledge about common insects and mites has been reviewed.

[Over 500 insect and mite species](#) are in use as traditional medicine in [Chhattisgarh](#) Over 3500 traditional healers are practicing this unique knowledge.

(Lead Paper presented at International Conference on “Promotion and Development of Botanicals with International Coordination: Exploring quality, safety, efficacy and regulations”. February 25- 26, 2005 Supported by: Drug Information Association, [USA](#) Secretariat: School of Natural Product Studies Jadavpur university, Kolkata 700032.)

### **Introduction, Methodology and Research Findings.**

[Chhattisgarh](#), the herbal state, is rich in natural biodiversity. Thousands of herbs grow naturally in its dense forests. The natives and traditional healers have rich traditional medicinal knowledge about these herbs. These herbs are used alone or in combination with other herbs both internally as well as externally in treatment of many common diseases. In [Chhattisgarh](#), the healers are also having rich traditional medicinal knowledge about insects and mites.

These are also used as source of food (Oudhia, 1998, 2002a, 2003 1,6,8,11,15,20,). [Trombidium sp.](#) (Oudhia, 1999a, 2003,3), [Cimex lectularius](#) (Oudhia, 2001), [Helicoverpa armigera](#) (Oudhia, 2001 b), [Photuris sp.](#) (Oudhia, 2002 b) [Oecophylla smaragdina](#) (Oudhia, 2002 c,) [Aspidomorpha miliaris](#) (Oudhia, 2003,14), Termites (Oudhia, 2003,2) are among these insects and mites Many of these insects and mites are considered as problematic pest of the agricultural crops. These insects and mites are used in treatment of common as well as complicated human diseases. (Oudhia, 2003, 1,5,9,12,19,21,22,24). The insects and mites feeding on medicinal herbs are considered superior in terms of medicinal properties as compared to their hosts (Oudhia, 2003(4,7,10,13,16,17,18,23). [The excreta of full fed insects and mites are also used as folk medicine](#) (Oudhia 2003,26). The detailed Ethnoentomological surveys conducted in different part of Chhattisgarh revealed that over 500 insect and mite species are used as medicine. Through these surveys many valuable information have been generated. ([Table -1](#)). Over 3500, traditional healers are still using [these creatures](#) as medicine. In these series, many interesting observations and experimental results have been recorded viz. effect of Total solar eclipse on insects and polythene eating beetles (Oudhia, 1999b and 2003, 25).

#### **(I) POD BORER or the [gram caterpillar](#) *Helicoverpa armigera* Hubner**

The POD BORER or the gram caterpillar *Helicoverpa armigera* Hubner ([Lepidoptera: Noctuidae](#)) is cosmopolitan and is widely distributed in [India](#). It is a serious pest of [chickpea](#) (*Cicer arietinum*), [pigeonpea](#) (*Cajanus cajan*), [cotton](#) (*Gossypium sp.*), [sorghum](#) (*Sorghum bicolor*), [okra](#) (*Abelmoschus esculentus*), and [maize](#) (*Zea mays*). Medicinal uses of [Helicoverpa](#) have not been reported in the available literature. Many previous studies

conducted in Chhattisgarh region in India have revealed that the native people, particularly the old villagers, have rich traditional knowledge about common insects and mites. A survey was conducted during 1998-99 to list out the information on traditional medicinal knowledge about *H. armigera*.

A detailed Ethnozoological survey was conducted in [Raipur](#), [Bastar](#), [Rajnandgaon](#), [Durg](#), [Mahasamund](#), [Sarguja](#), [Kanker](#), and [Bilaspur](#) districts of [Chhattisgarh](#). With the help of a well-prepared questionnaire, common information about the pod borer was collected from 100 randomly selected villagers. Based on the responses to the questionnaire, 15 villagers (5 from [Raipur](#), 3 from [Bastar](#), 5 from [Durg](#), 2 from [Sarguja](#)) having some knowledge about the medicinal uses of *Helicoverpa* were selected. Through regular visits to their villages and with the help of regular correspondences, the information on medicinal properties of *Helicoverpa* was collected.

The survey revealed that these villagers (mostly above 60 years of age) use *Helicoverpa* alone or in combination with herbal drugs to treat more than 50 common diseases. Some medicinal uses are described below. *Helicoverpa* is used with herbal drugs such as [Ashwagandha](#) (*Withania somnifera*), [Safed Moosli](#) (*Chlorophytum borivillianum*), and [Satawari](#) (*Asparagus racemosus*). Villagers use powder (after drying and crushing) of caterpillars as a tonic for many common ailments such as fever, general weakness, and nervous breakdown. They generally apply the fresh extracts of caterpillars on injured parts of the body to stop bleeding as a first aid measure. This is a common practice in Chhattisgarh region. A villager from Durg, who is also a traditional healer, uses the aqueous extracts of caterpillar to promote hair growth. It is used externally. Many villagers use powder of the caterpillars with [Sanai](#) (*Cassia obtusifolia*) as a purgative. Sanai is a reputed purgative. Addition of caterpillar to Sanai increases its effectiveness. In Chhattisgarh, *Helicoverpa* infests many common [weeds](#). [Sphaeranthus indicus](#), locally known as [Gorakhmundi](#), is a common weed in [chickpea fields](#). *Helicoverpa* caterpillar feeding on *Sphaeranthus* leaves is used for the treatment of eosinophilia and asthma.

During the survey, the villagers complained that the new generation is not much interested in medicinal properties of common insects and mites. The survey suggested that there is a need to document the medicinal and other uses of *Helicoverpa* with the help of extensive survey. The study indicated that there is a tremendous scope in this new field of research. (Oudhia, 2001 b).

(II) [GREEN LEAFHOPPER \(GLH\)](#), [Nephotettix nigropictus \(Stal.\)](#) and [N. virescens \(Distant\)](#).

GREEN LEAFHOPPER (GLH), principally [Nephotettix nigropictus](#) (Stal.) and [N. virescens \(Distant\)](#), are found all [rice](#)-growing regions of [India](#). These species are also known pests of rice in [Japan](#), the [Philippines](#), [Taiwan \(China\)](#), and [Sri Lanka](#). In Chhattisgarh, *Nephotettix* sp., commonly known as Hara Maho or Saunf Keda, is one of the problematic pests of [rice](#). To farmers and agricultural scientists, GLH is a serious pest, but to [folk doctors](#), it is a

source of additional income. The peoples of Chhattisgarh use many problematic [weeds](#), insects, spiders, and mites as a source of medicine.

As Ethnozoological survey was conducted in [Raipur](#), [Bastar](#), [Bilaspur](#), [Durg](#), [Sarguja](#), [Mahasamund](#), and [Rajnandgaon](#) districts of [Chhattisgarh](#) during 1998-99 to list the medicinal uses of common and problematic pests of different agricultural crops including rice. The study focused on folk doctors older than 60 y. In all, 20 folk doctors were interviewed and some common medicinal uses of GLH were compiled.

The survey revealed that folk doctors in the region use GLH as an additive to make traditional herbal drugs more effective. [Van Bhengra](#) (*Tridax procumbens*), a common rice weed, is used to stop any type of bleeding, and folk doctors mix fresh GLH with Tridax to increase its efficacy. Similarly, dried [leaves of the upland weed Kukronda](#) (*Blumea lacera*) are used to reduce the intensity of [asthma](#) attack. Dried [leaves](#) of *Blumea* with GLH are burned and the patient is advised to inhale the fumes of the mixture.

GLH was also a common major ingredient in many popular herbal combinations to treat fever and diseases such as gonorrhea. GLH that have fed on medicinal [rice](#) var. Kalimoonch were reported to be useful for treating skin problems. Freshly crushed GLH is prepared as a paste and applied on the affected area. GLH is also popularly used as a poultry feed in the region. A folk doctor from [Sarguja](#) said that GLH and brown planthopper [Nilaparvata lugens](#) (Stal.) combined can cure more than 40 diseases. The medicinal uses of GLH have not been previously reported.

This survey covered only a small number of the more than 2,000 folk doctors in Chhattisgarh practicing and using traditional systems of healing. A detailed survey is in progress and is expected to provide information on the medicinal uses of GLH and other rice pests. In this survey, folk doctors said that useful insects with high medicinal value can be easily identified through their specific behavior and feeding habits.

### (III) [RED VELVET MITE](#), [Trombidium grandissimum](#) Koch

[RED VELVET MITE](#), [Trombidium grandissimum](#) Koch, locally known as [Rani Keeda](#), is one of [the beautiful mites](#). This predatory mite appears [on ground surface](#) in rainy season in Chhattisgarh and is found in almost [all soils](#) especially in alluvial soils. The tribes of Chhattisgarh use this mite for [the treatment of different diseases](#). A survey was conducted by India Gandhi Agricultural University, [Raipur](#) ([India](#)) to list out the existing uses of this mite with specially prepared questionnaire. The survey revealed that the inhabitants of Chhattisgarh use this mite (in combination with other herbal drugs) for the treatment of more than 10 [important diseases](#) including malaria, urinogenital disorders, paralysis, etc. Its use as sexual stimulant is most popular in the region. The traditional healers of the region purchase the female mite from villagers for Rs.25/100 mites for preparing drugs. The survey suggested that there is a need for documentation of other uses of this mite. (Oudhia, 1999a, 2003,3).

(IV) [BED BUG, \*Cimex lectularius\* L.](#)

[BED BUG, \*Cimex lectularius\* L.](#) feed on human blood at night and hide during the day in cracks and crevices. [These bugs](#) are wingless, grow to be about inch long and have oval, flattened, brown bodies. Chhattisgarh is rich in biodiversity. The natives use many insects, mites and spiders as medicine. To list out the traditional medicinal uses of Bed bug (commonly known as medicine), an Ethnoentomological survey was conducted during July-August 2000. Fifty traditional healers from six districts (viz. [Raipur](#), [Durg](#), [Rajnandgaon](#), [Bilaspur](#), [Sarguja](#) and [Bastar](#)) of Chhattisgarh were selected. The survey was done with the help of personal interviews weekly visits to traditional healers. The survey revealed that many traditional healers use this harmful insect as medicine. It is commonly used in treatment of epilepsy, piles Alopecia and urinary disorders. The traditional healer of Sarguja was found using this bug internally in case of snakebite. External application on piles, head (for promoting hair growth), inside the urethra (in case of urine retention) were noted as most frequent uses of this bug. These medicinal uses of Bed bug is described by the traditional healers of Chhattisgarh have not been reported in available literatures. However, [\*Cimex\*](#) is a popular Homeopathic medicine. The survey revealed that there is a strong need to conduct a detailed Ethnoentomological survey in order to compile the traditional knowledge about insects, mites and spiders available in Chhattisgarh. (Oudhia, 2001).

(V) LIGHTENING BEETLES or Fireflies or Lighting bugs

[LIGHTENING BEETLES](#) or [Fireflies](#) or [Lighting bugs](#) are common insects found in forest areas of [Chhattisgarh \(India\)](#). Tribals of Chhattisgarh use many insects, mites and spiders for the treatment of their health related problems. Series of Ethnoentomological surveys were conducted by the SOPAM to list out the traditional medicinal knowledge about common insects, mites and spiders in Chhattisgarh. The survey of year 2001 is focused on Fireflies. The survey was done with the help of personal interviews and weekly visits to traditional healers to observe their healing practices. The survey revealed that most of the traditional healers use fireflies as first aid case of injury. Freshly collected crushed Fireflies are used as styptic to stop the bleeding. In forest areas, casualties due to wild bear attack are common. Traditional healers use herbal mixture for the treatment of patients Fireflies is one of the main constituents of this herbal mixture. Second popular use of this insect is in case of cold borne earache. In earache, the Fireflies are mix with Neem ([\*Azadirachata indica\*](#)) [leaf](#) juice and the liquid extract is applied in the affected ears. This use is found very common even schoolchildren are aware of it. These medicinal uses of Fireflies have not been reported in available literatures. (Oudhia, 2002 b).

(VI) [HOUSEFLY, \*Musca nebulo\* Wiedemann](#)

Of all the familiar household pests, the HOUSEFLY, [\*Musca nebulo\* Wiedemann](#) is the commonest. But in many parts of Chhattisgarh, [housefly](#) is used to treat many common

diseases. A survey conducted during 1994-99 revealed that many folk doctors use [housefly](#) as medicine. Generally, [housefly](#) is used to treat more than 15 common diseases. Two most popular uses of this insect are described here. These popular uses are (i) For dyeing the hair black (ii) To cure the cold fever. For dyeing the hair black, folk doctors take 100 houseflies and mix them in [sesame oil](#). After mixing, the oil is kept under open sky in direct sunlight for forty days. Then this oil is used to dye the hair black. For treating cold fever, one housefly, half [black pepper](#) (*Piper nigrum*) and one pinch of [Hing asafoetida](#) are mixed and this mixture is applied on eyes. This treatment is said to cure cold fever. The survey also revealed that the folk doctors of NorthEastern hilly part of Chhattisgarh use frequently the [housefly](#) as medicine.

## (VII) TERMITE

In general [Termite](#) is considered, as [enemy to farmers](#) as well as common person but for the traditional healers of Indian State Chhattisgarh [Termite](#) is a source of valuable medicine. They are using Termite in treatment of over fourteen diseases both internally as well as externally. It is in use for both human beings and cattle. Through the ethnobotanical and Ethnozoological surveys conducted in different parts of Chhattisgarh, the author has collected valuable information on this aspect.

Although [all stages of Termite](#) are used as medicine traditionally but the use of [Termite queen](#) is very popular among the traditional healers. The queen is used as [aphrodisiac](#). It is given to the newly wed couples as gift. In Chhattisgarh the natives as well as healers prepare different dishes using Termite queen. These dishes are given to the patients recovering from exhaustive diseases and the women after childbirth. The nature of queen is considered hot. The traditional healers of Chhattisgarh Plains informed that the judicious use of queen develops natural resistance in body and helpful in treatment of modern diseases like [AIDS](#). The soil of [Termite mound](#) is having multiple traditional uses. [The herbs growing on and around the mound](#) are considered rich in medicinal properties. The healers informed that around this mound specific herbs grow and these herbs don't found elsewhere. They give the example of Bambi Bhaji. This specific herb is used traditionally as medicine. It is also a popular potherb. Its long time use results in removal of toxins present inside the body. The patients having snakebite are suggested by the healers to take this herb upto long time. [The soil of mound](#) is considered good for many agricultural crops. The farmers engaged in cultivation of medicinal crops mix this soil with farmyard manure. The presence of this soil [near to the base of Rose](#) plants protects it from insects. The traditional healers engaged in preparation of Gulkand use this soil specially. The healers of Southern Chhattisgarh consider the soil of Termite mound beneficial for the medicinal trees like [Harra](#), [Bahera](#), [Sirsa](#) etc. Termite mound is home for [snakes](#). These snakes feed on rats. This is the reason the farmers avoid the destruction of mound. The [Almond](#) growers take the service of Termite to peeling the soft fruit cover. The flights of winged adults are considered as a sign of bad period for health. The natives are advised to take special precaution during this period. These traditional uses of Termite are very popular. This popularity clearly indicates its efficacy. Every year much agrochemicals are dumped on earth to manage these creatures. These traditional uses open a door to new field on which



our researchers can focus their studies. (Oudhia, 2003,2).

These surveys suggested that (1) there is a need for more extensive surveys in order to document all the information available. (2) The traditional healers engaged in conservation and utilization to this knowledge must be encouraged (3) Identification of potential formulations and systematic clinical trials are essential (4) The insects and mites attacking on Agricultural crops and used as folk medicine should be given special emphasis so that the farmers can earn an additional income from these pest.

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[May I suggest some medicinal herbs for Parkinson's disease? 12. Use of Ficus fruits.](#)

[MEDICINE MITE.](#)

[Besides Herbs, Wooden Rollers also give Relief to Patients with Paralysis.](#)

[Wild Animals Know Much About Herbs.](#)

### **New Comments added on March 18, 2010**

Recent Ethnoentomological surveys resulted in new information about medicinal insects and mites in Indian state Chhattisgarh and neighboring states. I have prepared report on Type II Diabetes. I have added thousands of pages in this report on medicinal insects and mites. In Cancer report based on over 35,000 Traditional Formulations, information on medicinal insects and mites is major part. The lead paper presented in Kolkata conference is available as updated document in CGBD database. The efforts are in progress to make CGBD database online.

### **How to Cite this Research Document**

Oudhia, P. (2010). Traditional Knowledge about medicinal insects and mites in [Chhattisgarh, India](#): An overview. [Updated Document, year 2010]  
<http://www.pankajoudhia.com>

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